LIKE COURTING DEATH.

THE PERILOUS LIFE OF A RAILROAD SWITCHMAN.

Employes Whose Lives Are Daily in Danger—Stories About the Boys Who Swing Lanterns—The Signal System—Many Crippled Veterans.

THE soldier who, "to drum-beat and heart-beat," marches away with his comrades to engage in battle for his country, and "those who go down to the sea in ships and do business upon great waters," are popularly regarded as being engaged in the most hazardous of all human occupations. Yet only a small proportion of the former class lose their lives or limbs upon the field of wars, while, to judge from the endless series of fish, storm, wreck, serpent, and other nautical yarns spun by retired ancient mariners, not a large percentage of sailors lose their lives through the perils of the sea.

The soldier, in the midst of the roar and smoke of battle, and the seaman, creeping out upon an icy yard to reef a sail that is flapping above the booming waters, no more literally take their lives in their hands than do the thousands of cool-headed, fearless men who operate

MAKING A CUT-OFF.

the vast systems of railroads which, like a net, spread over our broad country.

Most people would no doubt decide that of the latter and numerous class those subjected to the greatest perils are the engineer, stoker—the entire crew, in fact—of the limited express, as with a roar and a swish it dashes on over bridges, under arches, in its long journey across half the mighty continent.

Yet this judgment would be incorrect. The railroaders subjected to the greatest dangers, and who most frequently lose their lives and limbs, are undoubtedly the switchmen.

Of these the general public has little knowledge. We all see the keen-eyed engineer, with his hand upon the steel bar which serves as a rein to control the "iron horse," the fireman shoveling coal, the conductor making signals, and the brakeman turning the circle which sets or releases the clamps that retard the movements of the wheels; but few of us know anthing of the men who transfer cars from track to track and from yard to yard; who break up incoming trains, and who, from many sources, make up others to go out again in their stead.

As everybody (with the possible exception of the New-Yorkers, who are struggling for the World's Fair) well knows, Chicago, the terminal point of more than a score of trunk lines, is the greatest railroad center on the globe. More trains being there received and dispatched than elsewhere, it becomes the best possible place to study the switchman at his task.

To select the best hotel in Chicago, the finest store, the largest grain elevator, or the most imposing building, is an undertaking few would care to essay. The same difficulty would confront one who desired to point out the leading railroad switching yards. Many of them are on so vast a scale as to leave the critic in grave fear of making an error if he designated any one of them in particular. At the same time he would hazard nothing in pronouncing those of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway to be quite the equal of any and all others.

At Western avenue, three miles back from the lake, a great viaduct crosses the tracks of the Northwestern and St. Paul Roads. Here, as evening closes in and the work of making up the trains for the next day begins, an animated scene may be witnessed.

The trails left by light-hearted children sporting in the first snow of winter would seem scarcely more confused than do those lines of intersecting steel rails, which from the viaduct stretch out for two miles and more to the westward.

Here, at seven o'clock, the hour when the night gangs of switchmen go on duty, and the heavy work begins, half a score and more of huge engines may be seen, while at the round-house nearly as many

A LUNG OUT.

more are making ready to do their share in the labors of the night.

The scene from the viaduct is at once imposing and fascinating. The evening express-trains are arriving amid the bright gleaming of head-lights and the scintillating columns of sparks flying upward from many smoke-stacks. Locomotives puff and snort, whistles blow, bells ring, trains change places, lights are displayed which in number and brilliancy seem to rival the hues of the rainbow, and all blend and change with a rapidity suggestive of a kaleidoscope rather than an actual scene.

To descend from the vantage-ground of observation on the viaduct and attempt to traverse, unattended, the net-work of steel rails with switches connecting them in every direction, would appear like courting death, and would seem to warrant the arrest of the foolhardy individual for a would-be suicide. Accompanied by a guide, however, who thoroughly knows the ground, the journey may be made with tolerable safety, and such a tour will well repay the investment of toil and labor.

"The army swore terribly in Flanders," says Uncle Toby in the novel; and in this regard, as well as in facing death at the call of duty, the switchman may be compared to the soldier. Indeed the latter must have been well instructed in the "profane languages," and that under the direction of a real master, to be rated

GIVE HER A "KICK."

with the individual who swings the lantern, sets the brakes, and throws the switches in one of Chicago's great switching yards. This will be noticed at once, but, as the provocation often seems great, the profanity almost a matter of course, and really adding emphasis to orders and force to warnings and signals of danger, the visitor soon ceases to regard it as intended wickedness and accepts it as a necessary adjunct of the business.

The first, and, after everything has been examined, the greatest, wonder to be seen there is the excellent system that prevails and the wonderful order brought out of the seeming "Chinese puzzle" of mingled tracks, frogs, and switches. Bells are clanging in half a dozen different keys, and locomotives with from one to twenty cars are crossing each other's tracks in a manner that would seem to insure the destruction of some of them.

That collisions occur but seldom is chargeable to the knowledge possessed by the members of the different switching crews, and the watchfulness exercised by them. The gentle lady who causes sweet music to issue from the pianoforte understands the black and white rows of ivory which constitute the key-board of that wonderful instrument, and the combination of harmonious chords that may be produced therefrom, no better than the roughly dressed, profane-speaking switchman does every inch of his yard, every avenue of communication from point to point, the speediest possible method of transferring a car, and the

"COME AHEAD, EASY."

entire code of signals which reduces accidents to a minimum.

Unfortunately there is no universal system of lights and signals, though with but few exceptions the various roads of the country use the code adopted by the convention of freight managers held in the city of Philadelphia a few years ago. Before that time each road had its own code, which added to the switchman's care and danger, since a crew from one yard must often invade others, and must thoroughly understand the different systems and the points at which they change.

The Philadelphia code has bettered things and largely reduced the list of accidents, but matters in that direction can be still further improved, and no doubt this will be brought about at no very far distant time. It surely will be if the men who do the actual work in the yards ever come to decide the matter. As it is, the switchman is not completely educated in the knowledge of his craft until he knows the meaning of every signal light in each and every one of the numerous Chicago yards. One light only has a universal meaning. Red is everywhere the signal

SIGNAL TO STOP.

of danger. Some systems display a green light to indicate that the road is clear, while others use the same color as an evidence that extra caution must be exercised.

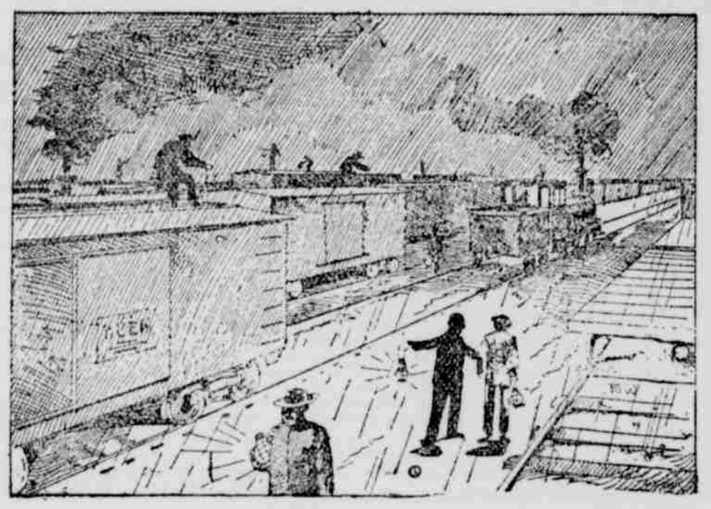
Amid the din and clatter of a switching-yard the human voice cannot be relied upon, and the lantern takes its place. With this simple instrument conversation is carried on without words or ears, and with singular freedom from the errors of articulate speech. Swinging the lantern above the head is termed the "high ball" signal, and signifies to go ahead, and that in a hurry. To stop the train the reverse signal is given, the lantern is swung across the track in the lower half of the circle. When the engineer sees the light held in a high and stationary position he understands that he is backing up against a train and must use caution and go slow. A slight movement of the lantern up and down means "come ahead easy." This is resorted to when a car-length separates the car to be coupled. All trades have their peculiarities, and in the parlance of the switchman, "a car length" means a space of about one hundred feet, or more than three times the actual length of a car.

A switching crew is comprised of three men, of which one of them, the foreman, has general charge and keeps a lookout, lending a hand to the work as necessity compels. Of the remaining two, one throws the switches while the other performs the dangerous task of "cutting off" cars and making couplings. A crew does double duty; it "breaks up" trains and sends cars to the different "in-freight" yards where they are unlocked, and also gathers together and "makes up" trains to be hauled out of the city. Many switchmen own lanterns for which they have paid quite a pretty little sum, and which

AFTER YOU GO TO WORK SWITCHING.

they burnish up and care for as tenderly as a mother manages her child, and more so than some of them, it may be.

With the greatest possible care accidents are of frequent occurrence. Cars



AT WORK IN THE SWITCH YARD.

are sometimes demolished, or so badly injured as to render a trip to the repair shops a necessity. By the "rip" is meant the repair yards, where slight disabilities, such as the loss of a "lung," are repaired. When the draw-bar by means of which cars are coupled together is pulled loose, the situation is described by the expressive words, "lung out," to which is generally added the bit of profanity most appropriate to the situation. A "lungless" car is as useless as a wagon without a whiffletree to which the horse should be attached.

Chicago railroads demand more of their switchmen than do those of any other city in the world. This is due to the hundreds of miles of track, far surpassing that of any other city, with all of which he must be familiar. A single trip frequently takes a crew to half-a-dozen yards filled with locomotives and moving trains. They must not only understand the different signals in use, but be familiar with all the time tables as well. A seemingly trifling blunder may destroy much property and take away numbers of lives. No very disastrous accident has ever occurred in any of the Chicago yards, which fact is in itself a high encomium on the fidelity

THE SWITCHMAN.

and watchfulness of the profane yet conscientious switchmen.

As was stated in the outset, the life of a switchman is surrounded by danger. A false step or loss of balance may cost a leg or a hand, while a misunderstanding as to a signal or a switch may bring about a horrible death. Long familiarity with danger produces lack of caution, and the oldest and most experienced men often lose their lives or limbs through sheer thoughtlessness. Few switchmen serve many years without losing some member, a finger at least, and the hands of many of them present a decidedly crippled appearance.

At a great many of the railway crossings in Chicago flagmen are stationed to warn people of the approach of trains or locomotives. Of these, who number more than 500, the great majority have once been switchmen, and nearly all of them are crippled in some way. Many stump about with a wooden leg, while a still larger number have but the one hand with which they wave the cautionary signal flag. The ex-switchman who has survived the shock of an accident to become a flagman at a crossing can rival a sailor in spinning yarns, and the little box of a shanty where he makes his headquarters while on duty is seldom without a fair quota of admiring auditors. It is here, indeed, that many boys get the taste for "railroading" which takes them, at far too early an age, away from a com-

AN EX-SWITCHMAN.

fortable home and the influence of a good mother.

Like all railroad men, the switchman is a good liver, not disposed to be quarrelsome, and a hale fellow when not on duty.

They are organized into what is known as the Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association, which is at present one of the most powerful and best managed trade unions in America. In times of strikes it is a potent power. This organization is represented by the *Switchmen's Journal*, a publication which ranks well with that class of journals of the country.—*Dwight Baldwin, in Chicago Ledger.*

Josh Billings' Philosophy.

Face all things! Even adversity iz polite tew a man's face.

A learned phool iz one who haz read everything, and simply remembered it.

Confidence iz a big thing; it makes a hornet respectable, and the want ov it iz just what makes the ant dispised.

If I had a boy whose hair wouldn't part in the middle, I should bedew that hair with a parent's tear, and then give up the boy.

Dry goods are worshiped in this world more than the Lord iz.

Counciling with fear iz the way cowards are made; counciling with hope iz the way heroes are made; counciling with faith is the way Christians are made.

Pleazure iz like a hornet—generally ends with a sting.

The most dangerous characters in the world are thoze who live in the subburbs of virtew—they are rotten ice.

Lazyness iz a good deal like money—the more a man haz ov it, the more he seems tew want.

Thare iz no such thing az inheriting virtew; money, and titles, and fever kan be inherited.

Life iz like a mountain—after climbing one side and sliding down the other, put up the sled.

When a man proves a literary failure, he generally sets up for a critick, and, like the fox in the fable, who has lost hiz brush in a trap, kant see a nice long tail without hankering after it.

The devil owes most ov hiz suckcess tew the fackt that he iz alwus on hand. —*New York Weekly.*

Let the Cat Out.

It happened in Chelsea and on the day of the great Sullivan-Kilrain fight, says the Boston *Courier*. A little boy, the son of a highly respectable citizen, questioned his father as follows:

"Papa, who do you think is going to win, Kilrain or Sullivan?"

"What is that?" exclaimed the astonished parent. "You talking about prize-fighting? What company have you been keeping? Mary (to the mother), do you hear this boy? Do you hear him asking me about this prize-fight?"

"Oh!" replied the mother, motherlike, "I suppose he has heard some of his playmates talking about it. Boys will be boys, you know."

"He has no business to be with such playmates. He never hears me speaking of any such low and disgraceful exhibitions, such brutalizing spectacles. I would have this prize-fighting business put down by the strong arm of the law, swept off the face of the earth. My lad, if I ever hear you talking about anything of the kind again I'll—I'll—well, you'll get into trouble, that's all."

Next morning, when he went down stairs, his wife handed him the paper, saying:

"I had the curiosity to look to see how the prize fight came out, and it appears Kilrain was whipped."

"Whipped!" exclaimed the denouncer of prize fighting. "Then, by jingo, I've lost $10!"

An Incident that Both Regret.

Young Sothern's name was first made Edward, but it was changed at the christening to that of Edward. Edwin Booth and the elder Sothern were very intimate friends, and when young Sothern was born the father chose Booth, of all his friends, to stand godfather to the boy. Mr. Booth accepted the honor, and told a number of his friends, with some pride, that he was going to be godfather to Ned Sothern's son. One of his cautious friends asked solemnly if he realized the fearful responsibility he was going to take on himself by accepting the honor.

"How so?" asked Booth, slightly alarmed.

"You will have to be responsible for the boy's entire career," answered the friend. Knowing the somewhat erratic disposition of the elder Sothern, this suggestion almost paralyzed Mr. Booth.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "I can't undertake such a responsibility as that for Ned Sothern's son," and he at once telegraphed to Sothern his regrets at being unable to accept the intended honor. Young Sothern's name was, as a consequence, changed from Edwin to Edward, and now, in view of the young man's career, both professionally and socially, Mr. Booth regrets that he gave the excuse for changing the name.

FASHIONS FOR WOMEN.

PREVALENT STYLES FOR THE FALL AND WINTER DAYS.

Several Pretty Costumes Described and Illustrated—Extravagance in Shopping Viewed in the Light of Charity and Benevolence.

SEPTEMBER did not end the field sports of those fashionable New York belles who, to a certain extent, set the feminine fashions for the whole United States. On the contrary, the last days of October find them still indulging in fox chases, horseracing and other open-air diversions affected by the very rich and the very stylish. We get accounts of these doings, and from much nearer home we learn of various social occasions which display the ladies in toilets just betwixt the lightness of summer and the heaviness of winter. Leaf parties are a current new indulgence, and it looks as though autumn leaves were to figure conspicuously in the ensuing winter amateur decorations of various sorts. To be specific, an excellent toilet worn on a recent sunny yet not very warm day had a dress made of striped cheviot. The front of the waist was composed of a full surah vest. The felt hat had a velvet bow and a velvet flower. There was a summery aspect to the costume and yet the materials were quite suitable to chilly weather.

The employment of velvet, not only in ribbons but also in the composition of flowers, is a happy stroke in millinery. There is nothing softer or more becoming to the face than this material. As the ribbon velvets this season are being made with different-colored backs, a great deal of variety is imparted to costumes and millinery trimmed with t e . Some of the velvet and felt bonnets made to match the color of costumes have strings of a contrasting shade, black having red or green, while brown has light blue or old pink.

The toilet pictured in No. 1 is not recommended, just as it is, to la ies of moderate means. It is a transient affair, and could not properly be worn longer than this single month; but its outlines are those which will considerably prevail later, and the reader is, therefore, advised to study its points with a view to adaptation, rather than servile reproduction. There is something to be said, however, in defense of women's most lavish outlay for dress. It was a belle with practically limitless financial resources who said to the writer:

"No longer can foolish men send shafts of puny satire at us women on account of our supposed extravagance. No woman from the days of Eve to those of Langtry could ever have pleaded guilty of such utterly silly and profitless squandering as that of which Mr. Benzon, lately exploited as the 'Jubilee Plunger,' stands self-accused. Even the most ardent votary of Worth would be puzzled to throw away a million and a quarter in two years, and I am quite certain that if any woman did spend such a sum she would take care to get something more for it than the dull and dreary round of vacuous 'pleasures' which seems to have made up 'life' for the

NO. 1.

'Jubilee Plunger.' Mr. Benzon may well call his book, 'How I Lost £250,000 in Two Years,' for the money seems to have been productive of nothing more to him, even in the ignoble form of purely selfish pleasure, than if he had literally 'lost' the whole sum the instant he received it. It is impossible not to feel a little sorry for the foolish, lonely lad who has evidently been encouraged to fling away his money without even finding any pleasure in the operation, but one is even sorrier that a vast sum of money, which in good hands might have been a blessing to thousands of worthy men and women, has been flung into the hands of gamblers, racing men, and the very scum and curse of society. Now, if this spendthrift had been a woman, and dress had been her hobby, see how beneficent the results possible. Her money would have gone ultimately into the wages of all sorts of textile producers and manipulators, and her recklessness would have been as good as a big scheme of benevolence. So my conscience doesn't trouble me when, in a round of the stores, I spend money enough to pay a dozen factory girls' wages for a year. I just think that I am doing indirectly a work of charity, and that the retail merchants are really helping me to that end."

But it is indoors that the finer toilets now being prepared will soon be exhibited. Among all such costumes which the writer has examined within a week, and in an assiduous round of the designers' and makers' establishments, none better embodied cardinal principles of winter fashions than the one accurately sketched in figure No. 2. The material was gray faille Francaise, with a front of gray and gilt brocade, and stripes of velvet. But in countless modifications and combinations, you will see all winter long sleeves loosely puffed like these; skirts draped unbrokenly from waist to feet in that way; and similar disclosures of vests and petticoats profusely adorned. The perfect plainness of the waist and draperies makes a strong and effective contrast to what are called, for lack of a better name, mediæval fronts. The arabesque design in the example given was done richly with gold on a brocaded ground, but the same style is achieved with braid. Tea gowns as well as evening dresses have of late seasons been picturesquely made with long draperies falling from the shoulders, and now something of the same effect, but with much less pretentiousness, is produced by means of sleeves balloon-puffed from the tops of the shoulders to the elbows, from which point the forearms are often very tightly encased—with long gloves for evening occasions, or with a snug section of sleeve. It is in the rich and fanciful character of her vests, however, that the fashionable woman admits that stylishness is physically as well as metaphorically nearest to her heart. There is almost infinite variety of pretty devices in that portion of new gowns.

"I'm sorry, madam, but it is impossible."

"Are you sure?"

"It is absolutely out of the question, madam."

A slender, rather fresh-faced young matron had left her carriage in front of a Fourteenth street establishment where Time's ravages upon the beauty of the female face are repaired with neatness and celerity, and was discussing a certain matter warmly with the clerk in charge.

"But it would become me so much, don't you see?"

"Unquestionably it would, but it cannot be done."

"Are you sure of that? I saw Mrs. Brown yesterday with the loveliest gray hair I ever saw, and she isn't a day older than I am."

"She wore a wig."

"I don't believe it."

"But it is true nevertheless," replied the clerk, "and I know it, because we made it here."

After the young matron had left the shop the clerk turned to the writer with a sigh of relief and observed:

"That is the tenth so far this week."

"Tenth what?" was asked.

"Tenth miracle seeker. You have no idea of the craze there is for gray hair. Young women, especially those with fresh complexions, are absolutely wild about it. It gives to a face that is not striking a certain effect that must be seen to be appreciated. I don't wonder that the women all envy the owner of a fine head of gray hair. But graying the hair is beyond the hairdresser's art. We can make hair yellow as gold, red as copper, black as a raven's wing, and as brown as the coat of a deer in winter, but gray is out of our power. We can can often make wigs of gray which would defy detection. You remember the late Matthew Arnold's visit to America? When he was in Washington he said, with his accustomed candor, that he met there the handsomest woman in the world. She was the wife of ex-Senator Joseph A. McDonald, of Indiana. Mrs. McDonald is a slender woman, with flashing dark-gray eyes, a complexion of peaches and cream, and has a wonderful head of whitish-gray hair. She would be an ordinary-looking woman were it not for her hair."

"Is there no way of graying the hair by artificial means?"

"Yes, but the artifice is transparant.

NO. 2.

Women can use powder sprinkled over the hair after it is arranged, but unless they have black or very dark-brown hair the effect is bad. The man who can invent some other method has a fortune within his grasp."

He opened a few boxes that he took down from a shelf. They were filled with tresses of various colors and of various lengths.

"Here is a fine head of yellow," he said. "It is worth ten dollars. Here is one of brown that I will sell for half that sum. But for one pound of gray or white hair I will pay eight hundred dollars. There is not one woman out of a thousand who has a pound of hair on her head. Women who have half a pound are extremely rare and most women only have from three to five ounces. That is not half enough for a wig. Look at these."

Here the wig-maker displayed a lot of bunches varying in bulk and length, and of all imaginable tints save white or gray. There were bunches of brown, yellow, black and red. They a e worth from three to ten dollars each, and represented the entire market value of a woman's head of hair. Such a lot only brought to the owner a bare dollar or perhaps less.

"No," added the wig-maker, in conclusion, "I would not advise a young woman to cut off her hair and sell it unless she happens to have either gray or white hair. An ordinary head of hair will not bring as much as will pay for a plain switch; and as for a wig, it will not pay for the making o' it."

In the way of ball dresses there is going to be a simulation of simplicity. That is to say, skirts will hang plainly, with none of the puffing and looping of draperies which not long ago characterized all elaborate toilets. But an equal or greater effect of richness will be produced, and at no less cost than before, by means of fine embroideries and passementeries. Bustles will be so small as to create doubt whether they are there at all. For a general verdict upon the artistic worth of the forthcoming season's ball dresses, it may be set down that they will strike a happy medium between the lank æstheticism of a few years

NO. 3.

ago and the voluminous extensions of the immediately preceding period.

The engraving No. 3 shows an exquisite ball toilet made for, and extremely suitable to, a girl in her first season out. It was made of very light pink surah silk, barely removed from white. At the belt and just above the hem were fancifully embroidered bands of a much darker pink, and the lower edge of the skirt was a fringe. The front of the corsage presented a crossing of the silk, suggesting the big kerchiefs of bygone days, and the only departure from smoothness anywhere was in bunches of ribbons cut into sharp points and placed on the shoulders. A passementerie band, matching the belt and the hem, encircled the throat, forming what we call a dog-collar. In getting up an evening toilet for a young girl, this model is a good one to base your calculations on.—*Daisy Dart, in Chicago Ledger.*

MR. HARDNUT—Yes, my dear, she is good-looking and all that sort of thing, I'll admit, but she is a good typewriter and a-a-daughter of my old friend Wagfall—you remember Wagfall, who died in Nebraska? No? Well, that's how it is. I hope my explanation is clear to you. Mrs. Hardnut—Clear? Oh, yes, I can see right through it.

THEATRICAL DRESSMAKER—"What! This dress is too low in the neck? Why, it isn't half so low as the dresses of ladies who occupy the boxes." Great Actress—"True; but an actress must pay some regard to the proprieties, you know."